



Jake 00:15

Coach Jones, thank you very much for joining me on the podcast today. It's a pleasure to speak with you, you have the second most wins in ivy league history most ever at Yale. And you're one of the longest tenured coaches in division one basketball overall, I think there's 362 teams these days, and you're the fifth longest tenured, and in all of division one. So very impressive track record. I know when you joined Yale, I think there's 316 teams at the time. And yeah, it was ranked right around 314. So not a great program when you joined, but certainly a great program today and, and in large, thanks to you know, what you've done there over the last, I think, 25 years or so. So before we dive into, you know, some of the stuff you're doing today, and what you've done over the years, coaching, basketball, I think it'd be interesting to start with a little bit of your early days of coaching, when you first got into it. I understand, you know, after you graduated, you played basketball at Albany, and you went and graduated and started selling computers for a few years. And you know, you were doing quite well there and from a business perspective, making good money and everything like that, but decided you wanted to go and coach the JV team and ultimately ended up becoming head coach. So maybe you could talk about those early days. And what exactly sort of got you snake bit with coach basketball?

James Jones 01:28

Well, Jake, really good to be honest with you here. Yeah, so I was working for a computer company, and I just said make good money, but I was bored. And I got I got to the point where I didn't think I was doing anything for anybody but myself. And that we'll play in a little bit here in a minute, I ended up going to Albany to coach JV team, I was gonna get my MBA and go work on Wall Street, because there was a lot of money being made in the late 80s. So I started coaching a JV team. And I didn't know what I was getting myself into. I knew basketball, but certainly thought I knew more than I did. And that first team I had was 17. And three, and I thought coaching was easy. And at that point, I was snake that I ended up changing my master's degree from an MBA to educational administration. And the rest is history. I, I've been thankful to do what I do for a living, and I just been very fortunate.



Jake 02:36

Why do you think you were able to have immediate success with the JV team going 17? And three? Was it just that you guys had, you know, really good players or an easy schedule? or was there some aspect of your first season of coaching that you think you did a great job in certain ways, almost like, you know, musical artists that come out with their first album, sometimes it's like the best album ever.

James Jones 02:57

Yeah, I was just lucky as a kid by name of Jason graver, who was on a team. And then like I said, I thought coaching was easy. And it's easy when your players are better than everybody else at Sony, that that was the case early on. But same time, there was just a willingness to interaction with the young men that you coach, it's those kinds of interpersonal communications that really has driven me over my time again, my time in coaching, that makes all the difference for me as a person. Right. So

Jake 03:30

what was the story from there? I know first season I think you decided, you know, I want to go and go full time at this. And I think you had your ambition at like being the head coach of a do one team by the time we were 35 and ended up getting there a bit before then. What was like the path like for you from going from this first season coaching JV to ultimately becoming a head coach at Yale?

James Jones 03:55

Well, I was trying to get become a head coach my time I was 40 I believe I started coaching a coach when I was 35. So yeah, I got there a little early than expected. And you know, after that first year, like I said, I was snake bitten and this this was just like, you know, all feed in and I just started digesting what I was doing. On that first year. Doc solid the head coach at the time, asked me to go to a clinic and I in Rochester with him from Albany and you know, I really wasn't too keen on doing it I had that drive him in the car and you know, both ways there and the basically a chauffeur and then I got to the clinic and Beeline was talking in and I couldn't stop writing notes. You know, there was so many things that he was talking about that I didn't know because my my my basketball experience as a coach



was somewhat fractured and and small. And so I ended up really enjoying that and started putting together a binder of all the plays and stuff that I saw that I liked and just became more of a student of the game. And I you know, I had an opportunity to work for all the five years and And then assistant job came up again. And I was fortunate enough to receive it to get it from Yeah, well, I went to Ohio University for two years. And now I've been back a yell between five.

Jake 05:12

Yeah, it's a great story. I wonder, you know, I wrote in my initial reach to you, you know, the context here, like, I've had this podcast for a long time, most of my background is in technology and entrepreneurship and investing. But I called the local high school. And, you know, I wanted to see if I could kind of help out around the, the team a little bit, I had a guy when I played in high school, who would, you know, he wasn't there for every game or every practice, but it just kind of helped out. And I was like, you know, I'd like to just sort of help out the kids, I like mentoring younger people, whether it's in Korea, or basketball, or whatever it might be used to be career now it's, you know, become basketball a little bit more. And so I want to see if I can help, and they're like, you know, we could use a JV coach. So that's what sort of led me to fall into that position. And we just finished our, you know, the first season and I spent coaching and it was a phenomenal year really like a perfect time that I could imagine I could coach for another 10 plus years and not have sort of like a better I mean, we basically beat the last the best team on our schedule, and the last game on their senior night, you know, away game over time, reporting played a tie it everything, like everything you can imagine basically just an awesome end to an awesome season. And as I'm going into it, I'm like, Well, you know, yeah, I played in high school, but I was not as good of a player, for example, as you were, I understand that at Albany. And even more than that, I didn't really have like, the basketball knowledge. I wasn't like, you know, studying the game or practicing all that hard or anything like that when I was playing. And so, as I came into this coaching experience, I'm like, I think I have a lot of the attributes that can make, you know, a successful coach, but I definitely don't have like the basketball knowledge beyond just watching a lot of basketball



throughout the course of my left. And so I'm wondering, when you started, how much of that did you feel that you had from being a player? versus how much did you have from, you know, going clinics and, you know, taking things from Beeline or whatever it might be in sort of accumulating your basketball knowledge after you started coaching? Yeah,

James Jones 07:04

I certainly did. After I started coaching, as I said, like, you know, I started coaching, where you could, my basketball analogy probably could put in a thimble at that time, I, you know, as a player, I played the game, I watched it, I loved it, but I didn't, I didn't understand it fully. I didn't know it fully. And so that was what that was, I was tasked to do. So as an assistant at Aldi for five years, there's a lot to learn, because like when you're an assistant coach of division three school, you do a little bit of everything from, you know, cleaning, cleaning laundry to mopping floors, and, you know, and having them drive the van. So you have your hand and everything. And from there, Dakota, come in Albany, and he come to yell, and as an assistant coach and coaching in Division One, my first experience, and there's just there was just a lot to learn. You know, like I said, I made myself a study of it, to make sure that when I had an opportunity, I was gonna be ready.

Jake 07:59

Right? And how about the difference between being an assistant and being a head coach, it sounds like when you were head coach of JV, we're also assistant, a varsity and you've sort of bounced between mostly you spend time as an assistant before becoming a head coach. But how different and difficult are sort of the transitions from from one to another? Well,

James Jones 08:19

the transition for me wasn't, wasn't hard. I think that what happens with you, as an assistant coach, you have this inner voice that grows and grows and grows and grows and grows, and it gets to the point where it starts yelling at you, that is your time to be to be a head coach. And I remember when I was at Albany, you know, I was, you know, maybe my third year in, you know, as my knowledge started to grow, and



I started to understand more, and I wanted to be more impactful to what was going on and what we were doing. And I remember, you know, talking to Coach salaries about we could do this, we can do this we can do that we can do I can just rambling on to him, and he just listened to me. And then he stops. He goes, James, when you get your own job, you could do whatever the hell you want. But right now we're doing things my way. So that was something that, you know, maybe understood where my place was, and I was just the person that offered suggestions. And those suggestions, you had to be smart about how you offer them because you just can't bombard a head coach with 1000 suggestions. And then when I was at Ohio University, I knew I was ready to become a head coach when the head coach Larry Hunter started using my suggestions and practice in games. So if he would if I was going to not be these, if my suggestion was good enough for him to use, well, then why can I use it myself?

Jake 09:35

Do you think you could have developed into the head coach that you've become? Or you know, now you've had 25 years of experience? That's a little different. But when you first started head coaching, do you think those early years as an assistant contributed to your development more so than had you been? For example, a head coach, lower levels, or do you think that you could develop sort of equally well or potentially even better After rising the ranks a little bit as a head coach at lower levels rather than an assistant in college?

James Jones 10:05

Well, I think it all depends on the person. I think it all depends on that person. For me, this was natural to do what I did as an assistant coach and to learn under a couple of different people, and have an idea because a lot of times you learn what not to do. As an assistant coach, I think a lot of times, when you're on the ground, and you're watching, it's a lot easier to learn that way than it is. Those coaches that have never worked for anybody else, I think it's hard for them to manage a staff and understand and your staff, but that's a big part of what we do. The reason that we're really successful at Yale is because I think I have the best staff in the week. And they helped me tremendously in terms of everything that we do, and I make sure that best fit and they feel included in that. And I think that's a big part



of understanding, if you've never had an assistant coach, or have witnesses and coach very long, you might have a hard time understanding what it like to be an assistant and the truth systems the way they need to be treated to help you be the best version of yourself.

Jake 11:05

Yeah, and I understand that, you know, you did some coaching with us basketball as well. And that was a nice reminder after you know, many years not being an assistant being a head coach, you got to get a reminder again, of what it's like to be an assistant I'm sure that was pretty fruitful for coming back to the program at Yale and, and maybe making some tweaks around how you worked with your assistants there. But I want to get into, you know, Yale and, you know, your, your coaching philosophy there and basically your your key principles, just for a bit of context for, for the listeners, it's pretty, it's pretty incredible to look at, like, you know, I think this is you're correct me if I'm wrong as your 25th year at Yale, but your 24th season due to, you know, taking a year off with COVID. And, you know, the first 15 years, I think it was 15 seasons. Yale finished, I think first place maybe once in the in the Ivy League. And it was it was like a competitive team. I think you guys were in the top half of the league for almost every season, I think all but one, I think he finished fifth one year, one year, but every everything else is like second, third, fourth.

James Jones 12:10

No, not every season, we've been in the top half of the league, except for my first year.

Jake 12:14

Okay. Yeah. So that was that was maybe the fifth place finish was the first year. So it's been you guys were a top half of the Ivy League for your entire, you know, first 15 years coaching, but But you know, couldn't quite get over the hump to like be first you got there once, I think. And then since then it's been like a total, you know, it's a totally different story, the last eight seasons, you've won the Ivy League more often than not think five times first are tied for first, maybe one second and a couple of times. Third, you've won the



conference tournament a couple of times, NCAA Tournament appearances a few times, including the big win over Baylor, 15 and 2016. So like this has become like a super legitimate program in the last eight seasons. And not that it, you know, wasn't good for the 15. Before that, like we said, it's top half of the league every year. But was there something like sort of specific that that clicked in these last, you know, basically, you can cut your your coaching career yell into thirds. So the first two thirds, and then the most recent third, and the most recent third has been wildly successful? Is there something that happened? Or just the accumulation of little things that kind of, you know, turn the corner for the program?

James Jones 13:24

Well, first, like we we've been first a second the last eight years, except for one year we finished in third. So in terms of what's going on, like when I first got the job at Yale, I'm sure you recall that Ken in Princeton had a dominance over the league for 40 years. So the overtake the dominance, it's, it took some time to build and have people believe that, you know, we won a championship in our third year, but it was on piss and vinegar. And you know, we were nowhere near as talented as those other teams were that that year. So it's one of those, it's really difficult to win a championship, if your team isn't as talented as your opponents, and we were not as talented as our opponents top to bottom. So that growth over time that it took to build and have student athletes believe in what we were doing at Yale. That's what took time. And that's what's changed. The other part about it is that, you know, you talk about our philosophy in terms of what we're doing. I think that's been a big part of it as well. What we've done is is that we've cultivated who we are, we have a program now in a culture, and that culture is based on defending rebounding, in sharing, and we feel if you do those three things at a high level, you're going to be have a chance to be really successful. So I think that if you were to ask my, my first 15 years as the players on my team, what yell basketball was, you might come up with 15 different answers if you ask 15 different kids. But now if you ask Any kid in the last 10 years or so what yell basketball and based on what, what? Who we are, they'll tell you, we're gonna rebound defendants shit and share the ball. So I think that's been a big part of it too.



Jake 15:11

Yeah, so let me ask you, for those first 15 years, are you getting different answers? Because it changed from year to year, what your, you know, two or three or four main focuses were like what your basketball was? Or was it because you didn't as explicitly have a two or three or four things at all, you just had a bunch of things. We

James Jones 15:30

didn't explicitly not like we had a bunch of things, it just, we we probably we changed a little bit year to year in terms of what we emphasize and and who we were, because it had to change in terms of the players that we had. I mean, you know, like you can say you want to rebound, defend and share. But if you don't have the players that can do that. Well, that's kind of hard to have that concepts for your team. So it took a while to have that growth and understanding. But I do, I don't think we were as clear cut. And again, my first head coaching job, I don't believe we were as clear cut in terms of what we were demanding from our young men, as we are now. Yeah,

Jake 16:09

it seems to me, you know, I'm sort of studying these different coaches and their philosophies and trying to piece together my own and this year, you know, like I said, as JV High School, so it's a very different game. And I had our three focuses basically was like 100%, effort, strong Team v friend, strong team defense, and, you know, fast break points, because most of these points in these games are coming from like, transition layups and things like that, or the other teams turning it over and things like that. So those were like sort of the three focuses yours being rebounding, defending sharing the ball, obviously, the different game, like I said, But how did you arrive at those three things? Because like, obviously, they're fundamental defense, super fundamental rebounding super fundamental, sharing the ball, maybe the least obvious of the three, how did you sort of come to those as like the three tenants?

James Jones 16:59

Well, I think that like, when you're trying to base your team and build it, you know, you start with defense. For me, that's my, that's my thought. I was always a heavy defensive minded coach, to the point



where we've got practices to start the year where we would need to take a shot, because I was trying to emphasize how important defense was, you know, being able to stop people. So that's where it started with the defense. And then rebounding. It's something that's always been a part of who I was as a player, and the importance of that, but the one thing that we do with it, is that we have rebounding drills and practice every single day. There's a reminder about rebounding every single day, we practice following blackout. So I've talked to coaches that tell me they don't even do any rebounding drills in practice. So that was a big part of that is sharing, as you said the least obviously the three it's the most important because it's hard to have young men on your team feel invested, if they don't feel like they're a private office. And we had a young man in our program. That was the blackest black hole out of anybody that's ever played college basketball name is Greg and gyno and Greg, that the league in scoring, rebounding and block shots in his head wasn't made out of Brexit ve je be just retiring from the NBA right now. But he had a long career playing overseas. In any event, I had him in my office one day, and because he wouldn't pass the ball anybody had 17 assists to see no sorry, 14 assists his senior year. So that's like his entire senior year. He had 14 assists, that I brought in my office I sat him down I showed them video of him getting triple team in a post and trying to score and turn the ball over and I thought it would be easy for him to understand the importance of passing the ball but he looked at me looked at the video looked at me look the video and said coach, I think we're better off for me shooting and passing in either one of those two guys in the white on so at this point I knew I had to change because I hadn't wasn't Greg McDonald problem it was a change shown problem because I offense was good to get him the ball. But I thought that he would be understanding once of finding somebody that deals double teams and and for whatever reason he could not understand that concept.

Jake 19:20

Right. So I like to sort of plug in to each of those things are all very interesting. The first being teaching defense always being a defensive minded coach. One of the things that's been interesting for me I had to get through like some state licensing stuff, so actually wasn't even able to join the team until after like a few weeks of



practice basically. And so I didn't have like a full opportunity to have like a preseason and you know if and when I coach again, I'm looking forward to doing that. And so I basically to pick very few things to practice because my practice is we're basically limited to, you know, in between games when sometimes you have to rest legs and there's only so much you can basically teach when you have like as many back He says, As you do games over the course of the season, for next year, I definitely want to, like sequence things out more explicitly and be able to teach more than I was able to get in this year. How do you think about sequencing, the things that you introduced to your team from day one of practice onward? And particularly, maybe it might be easier to sort of explain that and, and go through that with just the defensive only sort of approach? How do you sort of stage teaching defense over the course of a season and training defense?

James Jones 20:28

Well, we start off by one on one, then we get to two on 23345, and we build it up to five on five, it's a slow build, in terms of what we're doing to create concepts, we start with a lot of close outs, because that's a huge part of what we do, because we're definitely in a team. So we're going to help out in the gaps, which is going to cause close outs. And if you close out too bad, that's going to lead to easy offense from other teams that get you in scramble mode, they want to bend and break you. So we want to make sure that our defense doesn't bend and we stay strong, and we help each other out. And we also help to help her. So we start off with one on one drills, like I said, two on two, three on three, and we build up to our shell, four and four, we do five on five shells. So that's the progression of it. And then as you get into the season, we started, you know, obviously we have our concepts and philosophies on how we're playing defensively, as I said, jobs that help and help them recover. But then we start going over the stout seeds in terms of what they do and how they play and making sure that we're able to take away either what they do a lot, or what may give us problems. Right,

Jake 21:38

I grew up a big Syracuse basketball fan. So obviously, like a fan of the two three zone. And when I got to this high school team this year,



that's what they they had run some man, but they'd also run some zone. And I just decided based on the simplicity of it, to stick with the zone. So we ran the zone the entire season. Have you ever been intrigued or interested by the zone? Whether it's, you know, obviously you haven't converted to it, you know, full time but using it in certain moments or against certain teams for certain reasons? No,

James Jones 22:09

I have no belief in zone at all. Well, number one, let's start off with younger kids, I don't think you should ever teach young kids to play a zone. They don't want any concept of playing a man because the game is gonna break down a man to man. Unless unless you can guide man and man, it's gonna be very, very difficult to be successful. So for me as a unless you are a Syracuse zone, where that's what you do 99% of the time, then all you're doing with the zone is you're rolling the dice and hoping another team messes. You hoping that you're trying to change up tempo sometimes that we might use. I mean, I don't know if we played a zone possession more than two or three zone possessions all you just that's something I feel comfortable with in terms of holding guys accountable. It's hard to hold kids accountable when you're playing the zone, because there's always somebody else they can point to as well. Coach, I thought he was gonna No, no, no. And Amanda, man, you can point things out in terms of what you're going to do a great deal easier for me. And that's just who I am. That's how I was brought up. So it's not it's not something I believe in. I think it's hard to be successful. If your plan is over, I think that you can schematic and beat some teams. But I think it's hard to watch championships plans on. Yeah, makes

Jake 23:28

sense. And then moving over to rebounding. You mentioned you do a lot of drills, including like, you know, boxing on on free throws, and things like that, what are some of your favorite rebounding drills that you think are most effective?

James Jones 23:41

Well, like we start the year off, doing what was called Animal ball back when I was a player where you have three teams, and you set them up around three or one team on the foul line. One team on one line



line the other team around the other way in line. So let's go blue, white and gray. So one player from each team is in and they gotta get a rebound and they gotta get a score, while two guys are trying to defend them. Once he scores, the drill does this one guy score the drill down to stop someone from his team bounces in to try to score as well. And you keep doing that to every one of the players on your team scores. So the guys around the around the lane line and the foul line. If the ball is coming out, they just tip it back in and so like a cage match of guys fighting for the ball. So that's that's one thing that we do that I like in terms of teaching toughness, because if you're not tough, it's hard to be successful, not drill. Yeah. And then then we do a drill like it's to be on three you have three guys around the perimeter, there's a coach, and he's going to pass it to one of the guys on the perimeter. You have three guys in a lane and then the numbers one, two, and three. The coach is going to call one of the numbers so say he calls to and passes the ball to one of the wings that whoever's to is got to get out to that When in contest a shot, the other two guys have got to talk and communicate, who's going to block out the other two guys. And defenses, gotta get three defensive rebounds in a row to get out. If the offense gets the ball, they just continue to play offense, if they score, they get another rebound and keep scoring, it doesn't stop until the defense gets a rebound. But it only counts as one, if you get the first miss, if you get the second or third miss, you're just playing. And you start back at zero.

Jake 25:31

Right, so a lot of, you know, toughness and conditioning and these rebounding drills as well not strictly like focused on just, you know, rebounding or, you know, the particulars of how to best secure rebounds, but really live action, and three on three and stuff like that.

James Jones 25:46

So let me tell you something, if you're in that drill, and you gotta get three to get out, and you get to four times, and you don't get it, you know how desperate you become, and how much you want, like how important that rebound becomes to you. And that's the that's the concept that we're trying to get off to our kids on every one. We want everybody, we want every kid to think that it's the fourth time



around, and you're trying to get out or we're trying to get a rebound and you're tired, and you're beat up. And that's how important it is for you to get this rebound. We'd like to our kids to think of every rebound that way.

Jake 26:20

Yeah, it sounds like a great drill. Are there others, you know, expanding rather than narrowing to just rebounding are there other drills that you feel are just like you need to drill or to

James Jones 26:29

there's a ton of them that we do like to do a different one every day we do W rebounding where we just practice, swing, and swing and spin the ball on there and off the ground, you gotta jump up and grab it with two hands we do back to back where we just have guys a lineup along with along the middle of court, and they get back to back and they are trying to get position and low man wins and who gets more space. And so yeah, they're tiny drills that we did. How

Jake 26:59

did you build your playbook of drills over the years? Was it you know, going into clinics and listening to guys like Beeline was it you know, like what how you think about like the framework for building your set of how you built practice.

James Jones 27:12

I think the great thing about coaches that we all steal from each other, and there's, there's a number of different places where you can find drills, and like, you know, I'll go to a high school practice. And I'll get a drill from a high school practice, I watch a video and I'll get a drill from a video that just comes like now like, you know, I get all these videos set. And like I don't watch them all. But you know, you watch you know, videos of other coaches and you find things out. So it's just a, you just find what you think you like. And I think that's what it is I just found things that I like over the years from a number of different sources, not just one, just a number of different sources to help me become a better coach. And now 25 years and, you know, there's not much that I add new, but every now and again, like my assistant coach may come up with something, or they see



something that I'm someplace and oh, yeah, I'd like to add that I that's a nice morsel that I'd like to add. And I was actually talking to my team, the other guy staff the other day, and I'm probably forgotten half of those. I've done that over the over the course of 25 years.

Jake 28:15

Right. So another thing you mentioned was, you know, keeping players vested, it helps to share the ball, make everyone feel like a part of the game. Another challenge is, you know, not just for the guys who are in there, making sure everyone touches the ball. But for the guys who you just can't play that many minutes, you know, passing the minutes around as a coach. So how do you think about like, well, a couple of questions here. One is the actual number of players on the team. I think this year, you've got like 1617 players, which might be a higher higher than usual for you. So how do you think about like the right number of players? And then once you have them, how do you think about you know, spreading minutes and, and, you know, communicating with the guys who aren't getting as many or any minutes about, you know, why they're not and how they can still help the team and everything like that?

James Jones 29:03

Well, we have 16 players on our roster, mainly due to COVID. We have a junior class of six guys, because we had two guys take out here. So in any event, that's that's why we have a number that we have, in terms of making sure guys invested. I think it's something that you got to communicate every day in practice how important guys are. Because you can't play everybody and everybody's got to understand that like, I mean, you know, you're gonna have an eight, nine man rotation, you know, maybe 10 in some spots in some situations, but you're not gonna play Tim kid 10 plays every game, at least most coaches aren't. So you want to make sure that those young men that come to practice every day, that they understand their importance, and you got to have conversations with them where we have, you know, we meet three, four times a year to talk about who they are and what they're doing. We charge every every practice every day. And those kids that aren't playing they know what their numbers are. This is why you're not playing because the guy Above you are doing better than you are. So



you got to try, you got to be better in practice. So that's one way to motivate those guys to be better in practice to try to get there. Because again, everybody can play and, you know, I met you also, this logic in is intelligent. So kids understand that like, Okay, well, Johnny's Johnny's, she's 38% from the arc and I shoot 20% Why would coach put me in the game over Johnny, because he likes me not because Johnny is better than I am, or Johnny shot the ball better than I am. And I have to prove myself, I have to work hard I have to get in the gym. I think that's one of the things that our guys do. The kids that don't play. They're heavily involved in the gym, getting extra time getting extra lifts getting stronger, because they want to play there. So it's a motivation thing for them. And you want to have kids like that. And unfortunately, that for us that we do.

Jake 30:48

Right, so what is understanding? This is an unusual year, because of COVID, what's your ideal number for a number of players on the team?

James Jones 30:55

I'd say well, 16 guys, and maybe one of them being a walk on. So 15 Kids, you recruited one kid being a walk on this happened to be there. But you know, most of the walk ons I have, then I treat it like walk ons, they're treated like every other player on the team. And they stay they they feel like they're recruited athlete to show, you know, they want to play as well. And, you know, they're pretty, I've had walk ons that have had that has helped that have helped us in games. So, you know, we want to make sure that, you know, we get that, like 1516 Guys, because, you know, not for him for, you know, to on to having an even number that that usually works for me.

Jake 31:32

Right? And then just because I've been thinking about this a lot, actually, I'm curious, like, what would be the key problems for you, if you had 12? Guys, or, you know, 19? Guys, let's say, like, way too many way too little? What are like what comes into play as the problem?

James Jones 31:47



Well, 19 Yeah, too many disgruntled employees. So if you have if you're playing eight, and you got 19. So that means that 11 disgruntled employees on your team. So that's more guys. And of the eight guys that you play, two or three of them are probably not 100% happy, because they're not starting, right. So now you have made me 13 disgruntled employees. And that's way more than you want to have. Because now that locker room, in a sense of voices that you hear, you know, what I like to think of when guys complain in my, in my locker room, if they do, somebody shuts them down, because it's more about the team than it is about individual. So I think that having too many guys and having too many guys that don't play, you know, Misery loves company, and you can get guys kind of like feeling that feeling one way about themselves together, which is no good for your program. And then if you have 12, the 12 is the injury problem. Like if you get too many guys injured, you can't even practice you got three guys, and you can practice today can't practice five on five anyway. So that limits what you can do, if you have injuries. Yeah,

Jake 32:53

that makes a ton of sense. So 1516 being kind of the sweet spot, and 16 may be preferable for four on for two on two, I haven't even numbers and things like that, that makes a lot of sense. So moving to a slightly different topic. I know right now you're on a recruiting trip and taking this call from the car, which I appreciate it. Like I said, obviously that's a busy part of, of being a coach, you know, at the college level, you know, Coach and Deewan just out of curiosity, like how how much time, you know, at different points in the season, offseason in season, etc. Do you spend on recruiting as sort of a piece of the overall pie. And you mentioned also earlier, you know, kind of the two big differences between your first 15 years and the last eight or 10 was, you know, not only installing this very explicit philosophy, which anyone in the last eight or 10 years could reiterate a note as well. But also just fundamentally getting better players and the time it takes to be able to recruit better players and build a better program. So you know, curious about the time allocation bit and then also how you've improved in the recruiting department over time.

James Jones 34:04



Um, um, so I say that first, but again, that time allocation terms of recruiting we're always recruiting is that you never not recruiting like it's year round in terms of how much time it's hard to hard to put a time or number on how much you do but you know, they're, you know, you're recruiting the kids that are still in your program, still, you're recruiting them, you recruiting recruiting kids that are committed to you. And now Now you're looking for the next class of guys that you're, you're handling the class behind them. So there's all kinds of emails and text messages and phone calls that go on kids visiting campus. Going off to see kids I don't see too many kids during the course of the year because it's very difficult to fly places to see kids. So that's that's tough to do, but I do get out. Probably a half dozen until done isn't time throughout the basketball season to watch somebody play, unless they're local, some local kids, I can see a little bit on like a Tuesday night after practice that makes it easy. But taking a trip to fly somewhere or drive three or four hours, that's probably somewhere between, you know, eight to 12 times a year during the season. In terms of our recruiting getting better, I think that, you know, it's gotten better because we've had more success. You know, it's easy to sell a program. When you've won championships, it's easier to sell a program when you've had a kid drafted in the NBA, it's easy to sell a program when you have personally, first team all league players, it's easier to do that because you know, people want to be a less why pin and Princeton was so successful why they have such a stronghold on this league so long is because of sss. Right, so

Jake 35:52

another question sort of going on a tangent, like, I think the little things that you do as a coach, or at least this was sort of what I was telling the kids this year was like, a lot of little things you do as a coach, and you do as a player, all these little things, you do them right, and you do them well, and they add up to you know, the big things. Bill Walsh, famous football coach has a book score takes care of itself. There's stories of John Wooden tell the story, how when he started the first team meeting, I think he told the players how to put on the socks and tie their shoes so that they could avoid blisters and things like this. Is there are there particular little things that you've done or sort of implemented at Yale over the years that may not



even be sort of, obviously basketball related, that you think of as sort of an outsized impact and improving the program?

James Jones 36:38

Well, um, I do something every day. I'm not sure when I came up with this, you know, I have a word of the day. And it's something that, you know, goes on and stuff that I think our team needs. So I talked about it. And, you know, I have it on a on a practice plan, and the guy that got to read it. And when we have a drink breakout practice, I asked one kid, the word of the day, if he doesn't know, we do push ups, and then he says the word and give the definition? And did I kind of get on a soapbox and talk about something I think our team needs, like, you know, if we're, you know, if I have guys that are frustrated, the word of the day may be frustrated frustration, and explain that and explain why it's harmful for our team. I think that gives me a way of being able to get inside and to be able to talk to our guys about something that is about basketball, but not directly about basketball.

Jake 37:32

What do you think might be some of your most frequently reoccurring words over the years?

James Jones 37:39

I that's hard for me to say. I mean, you know, I think that the thing that we do, most often is to just to let the kids know that we love and care for them, and that they always have somebody that has their back. I think that's what's the main thing that's important. Kids don't care what you know, until they know you care. So, you know, I think that's the message that I tried to send over the course of my time here.

Jake 38:03

Right, so one more question. And then I want to get into just a little bit on actually this season, very exciting season. But one more question sort of more generally on coaching. What's your when you get into the game, and you're like the game is ongoing? What's your style? During the game? As a coach? What are you focused on? What do you have the assistants focused on? Because you don't really want to focus on



that bring me like into a game situation as, as the coach, what do you think you do differently than other coaches?

James Jones 38:33

I have no idea what other coaches do what other coaches go through their mind. I know with me, I'm looking at, you know, obviously, both sides of the ball in terms of how they're gone and what we do. And then are we sticking to our game plan and how we're trying to guide them. Those are the two areas in which I'm paying most attention to, you know, my assistant coaches may be watching ball screen coverage or matchups. For a given game, who's gotten whom, where we have an advantage or who they have an advantage against, and how we want to take care of that. But those are the things that go through my mind. It's hard to say, you know, what other coaches are thinking about, or what do they what they're concentrating on when they watch a game?

Jake 39:15

No, yeah, that's a that's a great answer. That's what I was looking for. So now turning the page a little bit to focus on this season talking about this season a little bit. I heard you quoted on other podcasts. And this is probably the best team you've ever had top to bottom. And you know, so far, and I think that is maybe a preseason podcast or early season so far, you know, your guys performance has reflected that doing very well and in the league and also just against other opponents, to have your handful of losses have been you know, one was at Gonzaga, the other was at Kansas on actually just on that. Well, I bring that up. I understand scheduling has been sort of an interesting thing that you've developed over the years as well for getting you out to be able to play or go It's more difficult teams. But it's been challenging, right? Like people don't want to play, you know, because it could be like, you get beat, then it's like a bad loss. But there's not a whole lot of upside. So how do you go about getting like schools like Gonzaga and Kansas on the schedule?

James Jones 40:14

Well, you get lucky sometimes, like, right now, this year, we're having a hard time finding a high major game for next year, for the reasons you just stated. You know, so, you know, there are relationships that you have with certain guys, and you can call up



guys, you know, and ask them if they can definitely want to play that you have friends, like I was trying to get a game with, with Purdue because I don't care. We run a basketball committee for the united team team, but USA basketball and same thing with Jamie Dixon at TCU. I'll be able to kid in Dallas trying to get home. It's just been very difficult to try to look for people to play us. It's it's something that we it's a challenge. You know, I guess the good thing, because means we're pretty good, but it just makes my life a little bit more difficult than putting the schedule together.

Jake 41:04

Yeah, it makes sense. So anyway, aside from those couple of difficult games this year, you guys, and even in, I think Kansas game, you were up at halftime? Like, really? You know, I think historically, even over the last several years when you guys get to play these big matchups, you show up and it's why people probably don't want to play. Yeah. So so far this season, I guess what's your, you know, if you could sort of pause for a moment and just sort of like, look back on, on where you guys are and where you've gotten to right now. And obviously a good chunk of league games coming up and postseason play. So what do you sort of what's your evaluation at this point in the season? And what do you think you guys need to sort of improve upon or, or do better to finish the season the way you want to?

James Jones 41:50

Well, I think that early on the season, we were trying to figure find our way, I think that we've finally gotten to the point where we've gotten to a be in a good place in terms of understanding who we are and how we should play. And, you know, as I look at my team right now, it's similar to what I envisioned at the start of the year. I think that we can be a little cleaner offensively, teams are kind of throwing junk at us a little bit, you know, matchups, putting up on format on our five man playing a triangle and to switching all the ball switching all our screening action. So, you know, we need to continue to make sure that offensively we're fluent. And when we get a lead, to stay with the same thing we're doing, we've had times where gotten a little careless when we've gotten the lead. So I think those are the areas that I'd like to improve. I like what we're doing defensively. We are we are the best team in the league in our league



offensively and defensively in terms of efficiency. So we can keep that up, we'll have a good chance at winning the conference.

Jake 43:00

Right? And I know you guys had I think, for starters from last year returning all of whom average double figures, I believe. So that's always a good sign. And then you've got another guy who returned Danny Wolf, who is the leading scorer this season. And I think he averaged just a couple points last year. So maybe just taking that as a case study like, that seems like from afar without being, you know, super familiar with Danny or anything. That seems like an incredibly impressive year of development. Is there something that happened there that you can point to?

James Jones 43:35

No, I think it was just Danny's time. I think last year, again, he had a learning curve. And he was behind two seniors that were really good. So I think that was, you know, the biggest issue and I think it's great when a freshman could come in and learn as opposed to trying to figure it out for himself. So he's certainly ready to play right now. And he's proven that he's done a great job for us. And I think his best basketball is ahead of him. And I look forward to having an opportunity to watch him grow.

Jake 44:04

How does Yale differ from or maybe you can speak for sort of the Ivy League at large, to some extent differ from a lot of other teams, the top teams in college basketball that, you know, have to deal more so with, you know, on the one hand transfers and then on the other for, you know, some of the top top programs, obviously NBA people leaving early for the NBA. How is the Yale has Yelland and the Ivy League a little bit different? Do you view that as sort of like a positive that you maybe have to deal less with those things? How do you think about that?

James Jones 44:36

Well, we actually lost me only a year early which was not good and but like you said, That's a rarity that we have when guys go leave early, but it's great for our league that we could we get stay together and



not have our rosters just explode and change so often. I think that I'd looked at college basketball tonight now and it's not It doesn't look like anything than it was when I first started. And we're in a state of transition. It's not what it was. It's not what it's going to be. And you know, it's going to be, I'm gonna be curious to see what it looks like, after I retire, and how that how college basketball works. It's a tremendous sport. It's a great watch on television. So I hope that it doesn't change too much. But, you know, I'm actually afraid for us what in terms of some of the things that have come into it and, and what's happening, and we are certainly, I suspect that most college coaches would prefer to be coaching in Ivy League, just in terms of power rosters remain the same, as opposed to all the craziness they have to deal with the transfer portal. And I Oh,

Jake 45:48

yeah, makes sense. I mean, you know, even just from when I watched college basketball, growing up to today, it's changed tremendously, obviously had some NBA exits at that time, but not nearly the transfers. And it seemed like just a lot less one and done in terms of the NBA guys as well. Last question for you, again, appreciate all the time. But for this season, looking back, or even if it's if there's nothing from this season that stands out just overall in your coaching career, is there a particular story of a team and a game or, you know, even an individual player or coaching moment? I'm sure there's, you know, a million of them. But is there one that stands out that you can maybe tell or speak to just because I know from doing what I did this year, there's just so many moments that are so cool, and really awesome in terms of, you know, having an impact on a kid's life or having an impact on the team and how they remember their experience. Is there a story that comes to mind that you might be able to tell?

James Jones 46:46

Yeah, so we won. The first year in which we went to the NCAA tournament was 2016, we had one championship in 2015. Tie with Harvard, we had beaten Harvard on Friday night at that place, and we went up to Dartmouth. If we win that game, we went out right championship in Ivy League for the first time, you know, 40 years or whatever was, and we ended up losing the game. On the last second shot played by darkness. Horrific loss for the program. The next year, we



never really talked about it, we built up and so we go up to Cornell, and we beat Cornell. And we're 12 in one at a time. And I think we're one game ahead of Princeton. And so maybe Tyler Prince, I'm not sure. And then. So we're on a bus drive in Columbia. And everybody on a team is on a device watching their game on either the digital retina network at the time. And there was a kid by the name of Steve tap the ball blocked the shot, he scored a basket and blocked the shot to seal the win for her. And at that point, we won either the championship. And there was just unbelievable joy, childhood joy of our players jumping up and screaming and yelling on a bus because they're so happy that they won. It was like, you know, if you watch, you know, 12 year olds win the world, a Little League World Series, that was the feeling that went through the Boston it was something that I'll never forget. And I'm starting to play as one item.

Jake 48:31

Yeah, it's fortunate to experience something like that, you know, it's, it's a little easier to find those moments, like you said, with the younger kids, maybe and it's fortunate to have that be sort of the end to our season the other day, which is part of what was what made it such a cool experience. So anyway, it sounds awesome to be able to recreate that at the D one level, obviously, these guys are, you know, becoming mad at that point. And it becomes even harder to sort of find that childhood joy and a real genuine celebration. So anyway, it's been a pleasure talking with you, I really appreciate you coming on and, and sharing all these nuggets of wisdom with me. Is there anywhere you want to send people to, you know, follow you or yell basketball and you know, keep in touch with you on your journey?

James Jones 49:15

Well, yeah, there's a yellow basketball on Instagram. So just go to yellow basketball on Instagram now finance and that's a great way to follow us.

Jake 49:24

Awesome. Well, thank you again, coach. I really appreciate it. You

James Jones 49:28

be good man. Take care.